

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

SUBJECT: OMANI FOREIGN MINISTER ON USE OF MASIRAH

REFERENCE: A) MUSCAT 819; B) STATE 172253

1. OMANI FOREIGN MINISTER ZAWAWI INVITED EMBOFF TO HIS HOTEL AFTERNOON JULY 14 AND, AFTER GENERAL TOUR D' HORIZON ON SITUATION IN DHOFAR AND PDRY, CONVEYED FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM SULTAN QABOOS: SULTAN UNDERSTANDS USG WISHES TO MAKE USE OF AIRFIELD AT MASIRAH ISLAND PERIODICALLY FROM NOW ONWARDS. INCLUDING AFTER BRITISH DEPARTURE NEXT MARCH. THE SULTAN WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT "HOW THIS CONCEPT WOULD BE DEVELOPED." IT WAS AGREED THAT THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE GULF AREA SHOULD BE THAT OF THE STATES OF THE AREA, PARTICULARLY IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE SULTAN SUGGESTED THAT THE UNITED STATES, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD COLLECTIVELY OR IN COMBINATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MASIRAH ISLAND FOR OMAN IN A CONTEXT OF MILITARY SECURITY.

2. ZAWAWI WAS NOT SPECIFIC. HE STATED THAT THE SULTAN PLANNED TO START HIS FLYING SCHOOL ON MASIRAH IN JANUARY.

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HOWEVER, HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE OVERALL EMPLOYMENT

SITUATION ON THE ISLAND AFTER RAF DEPARTURE, SINCE THERE ARE 300 OMANIS EMPLOYED BY THE BRITISH ON THE ISLAND AND EACH OF THEM SUPPORTS A FAMILY OF FROM 6 TO 10 PERSONS. MAINTENANCE OF FACILITIES FOR US AIRCRAFT WOULD INEVITABLY ENTAIL EXPENSES WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE MET FROM SOME SOURCE.

3. FINALLY, SAID ZAWAWI, THE SULTAN WONDERED IF IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO SET UP A MEETING IN LONDON THIS WEEK BETWEEN THE SULTAN AND "SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE US EMBASSY." EMBOFF GENTLY DISCOURAGED THIS IDEA. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DAO HERE ARE PRIMARILY TO DEAL WITH BRITISH AND EUROPEAN REGIONAL MATTERS, NOT THE MIDDLE EAST. EMBOFF STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT THE USG WOULD NORMALLY PREFER TO CHANNEL DISCUSSIONS ON US CONTRIBUTIONS TO TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND MILITARY SECURITY THROUGH AMBASSADOR WOLLE. LATTER COULD CALL UPON APPROPRIATELY QUALIFIED US OFFICERS TO VISIT OMAN AS HE HAD DONE IN THE PAST. MATTER COULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED IN WASHINGTON. MEANWHILE. EMBOFF WOULD REMAIN AVAILABLE UNTIL COB JULY 16 IN CASE SULTAN HAD ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS OR MESSAGES.

4. RE TIMING, ZAWAWI SAID HE EXPECTED SULTAN WOULD LEAVE LONDON JULY 17 AS SCHEDULED AND ARRIVE IN SALALAH ON JULY 19. SULTAN PLANS TO RECEIVE A US COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR WOLLE, ON JULY 25. EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT HE WOULD TRANSMIT SULTAN'S MESSAGE PROMPTLY SO AS TO AFFORD DEPARTMENT TIME TO GIVE APPROPRIATE GUIDANCE TO AMBASSADOR WOLLE. ZAWAWI SAID HE WILL NOT KNOW HIS OWN TRAVEL PLANS UNTIL HE HAS REPORTED TO THE SULTAN.

5. COMMENT: ZAWAWI SPOKE WITHOUT NOTES. AS EMBASSY MUSCAT AWARE, HIS APPROACH IS SOFT-SELL AND HIS ENGLISH, WHILE EXCELLENT, SOUNDS LIKE CLASSICAL ARABIC TRANSLATED INTO SOMEWHAT ABSTRACT PHRASES. THERE WAS NO CRASS PITCH FOR CASH, BUT A CLEAR IMPLICATION OF A GENTLEMANLY DESIRE FOR A QUID PRO QUO. HE DID NOT MENTION ANY INTELLIGENCE MATTERS.

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